

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
March 6, 2008

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Janet Gorth, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Stephanie O'Keeffe, Barbara Sutherland, David Yaukey

Absent: Elsie Fetterman

Select Board Liaison: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Giovanna Mix (Administrative Assistant for Programs)

Guests: Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Marge Babb, Lillian Scott

Welcome:

Barbara Sutherland, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the February 7, 2008 meeting were approved and accepted.

Senior Trust Treasurer's Report:

Doris reported a balance of \$5,128.10 in the checking account. A separate checking account for Stay Put holds \$550.00. The total balance of the investments is down slightly to \$84,514.79. The report was approved and accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

COA Nominating Committee Report:

Rosemary reported that two applicants were interviewed on February 29. **Joan Golowich** is an Attorney who practices in Elder Law. **Joel Gordon** is a retired physics professor who is on the steering committee of Stay Put. The Nominating Committee was impressed with both people and recommended that the Town Manager appoint them to the COA. Joan would fill the vacated position of Tom MacAuley beginning immediately. Joel was to have filled the position that Elsie Fetterman will vacate in June, 2008. However, in the meantime, Janet Gorth has resigned from the COA, effective immediately, and Joel will fill that position.

The Nominating Committee will proceed to ask Barbara Sutherland if she would be willing to serve another 3 years on the COA and will search to fill the position of Elsie Fetterman when her term expires in June, 2008. If Stephanie O'Keeffe is elected to Select Board on April 1, her position will also need to be filled.

Question regarding Senior Center statistical reports to COA:

Nancy typically provides a statistical report of the activities of the Senior Center to the COA every month. The annual report summarizes those statistics. The monthly report takes a lot of staff time and it is a time pressure, therefore Nancy wondered how important the monthly document was to the COA. Stephanie suggested the report be done twice a year and be discussed at those times as an agenda item. It is important to be aware of the trends in activity. Twice a year was agreed upon.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Update on collaboration with Stay Put:

Joel Gordon reported that Stay Put was proposed 3 years ago with the goal of assisting seniors to remain in their own homes and age in dignity and confidence. The Interim Steering Group (ISG) has begun meeting with Nancy and Maura to find ways in which Stay Put and the Senior Center might find it beneficial to collaborate. They came up with two proposals, which would expand programs already initiated by Maura. 1) provide elders with transportation to doctor appointments, etc. 2) private pay health assistance, which would facilitate arrangements between elders and home health care providers. Both programs are modest at the present time due to constraints on Maura's time. ISG began focusing on the second proposal by evaluating qualifications of potential health care providers, determining how to establish the needs of the elder, determining how to establish the cost of the service and determining how to obtain useful follow up information from elders and providers. Once the methods and forms have been agreed upon they will begin to look for qualified service providers and advertise the expanded program. **Maura** expressed appreciation and excitement in working with Joel. She has a private pay home help list now and this proposal will make it more comprehensive, expansive and better. It will also provide satisfactory follow up with elders and the helpers, which has been lacking. At this point, the program is private pay and the elder or a family member negotiates the arrangement with the worker. It is hoped that in the future fees may make it possible for elders who can't afford it to also get help.

Nancy said the Stay Put collaboration would be a major help to Maura. It will enhance options for seniors and expand the current program.

The role of the COA outside of Senior Center business:

Nancy stated the Principal Goal of the Amherst COA:

To run a multipurpose Senior Center which serves as the community focal point for the provision of services for the elderly. The Council works to initiate, facilitate, coordinate and/or provide those services which in the broadest sense enhance dignity, support independence, maintain health, and promote the involvement of Amherst's elderly in the general community.

The role of the COA is primarily advisory, but the COA extends beyond just the Senior Center. We agreed to discuss that today.

Stephanie led an interactive discussion with members as outlined:

I. Are we fulfilling the goals and purpose of the COA?

Members thoughts and ideas:

- not enough outreach and education to the general public
- we focus attention on the Senior Center but overlook other things
- primarily Nancy and Maura address needs of seniors
- need more public education
- there is good reporting and documentation on how programs are working
- there is good a relationship with HVES
- need more lobbying efforts on the state level for legislation to benefit seniors
- Nancy estimates half of Amherst elders use the Senior Center in some way/the newsletter reaches ALL seniors
- we don't know enough about the size of our target population - the problems & varying needs are different among the different ages
- we need to dispel the myth that Amherst elders are well off (in reality many elders are in financial distress)
- the ongoing Outreach Survey assesses unmet needs of elders living independently by way of home visits
- the Social and Demographic Research Institute at UMass could be a valuable resource

II. What would we do if we had more information?

- educate via the press to make public more aware of services
- have COA member 'office hours' for consultation/announce the availability in the newsletter
- change programs based on feedback/are we overlooking some elders?
- collaboration with groups such as Stay Put to meet different needs
- COA could be a resource for other agencies in Town
- COA members could be on Town Meeting
- COA needs to be more vocal and write letters to the editor about the importance of maintaining services
- collaborate with Survival Center in the event there are unserved elders (already collaborate in Food Box program)

III. What is keeping us from doing some of these things now?

- time
- exposure to criticism
- complacency - the Senior Center is effective and does such a good job that we don't look beyond it

IV. Summary of what is needed

- increase our knowledge about exposure to legislative issues
- more actively advocate & educate via Town Meeting, letters to editor, feature stories, newsletter articles
- need for more information
- COA office hours
- contact UMass Sociology Dept
- tap into David's data & knowledge
- continue Outreach Survey
- invite Representative Ellen Story to give an overview of senior issues
- create a comprehensive report or publication on the senior population to present to Town (our 10 year public report is due in 2010)

Doris will look into setting up the "office hours" for COA members.

All members need to think about the issues to focus on, such as the budget cuts, then write letters to the editor – especially around Town Meeting time (April 28).

Legislative efforts: arrange one meeting per year to hear from Rep. Ellen Story and discuss our concerns.

40th Anniversary thoughts:

Nancy asked members if they wished to have a Hampshire Gazette insert in the paper this year featuring and commemorating the Amherst COA. The cost is \$1500. Volunteers are needed to help. The COA agreed to move forward with this and make it an agenda item for our next meeting.

Nancy would also like to plan a social fundraising dinner for the 40th.

On May 24th Alicia Morton, founder of an Amherst dance company, will celebrate her 70th birthday. She would like to put on a dance recital to celebrate her birthday and raise money for the Senior Center.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Senior Health Services progress report:

Nancy reminded us of the annual \$10,000 private donation to fund SHS. Last year Nancy applied for a grant from the Amherst Club for outreach (home visits by the nurse) and they selected us for \$1000. The Amherst Club raised more money than expected at their annual fundraiser, so we may get even more than the \$1000. In addition, Nancy and the Senior Health Advisory Group applied to Cooley Dickinson Hospital for a 5 year \$5000 grant for outreach.

Comprehensive Plan:

Rosemary reported. A Review Subcommittee completed that editing and revision of the Draft Master Plan in December and resubmitted it to ACP for final editing details. The CPC expects the Master Plan to be completed and sent back any day now. The CPC will study the Plan, it will then be presented to Town Meeting before going to the Planning Board for final approval. Approval is expected. The original Draft Master Plan is still available on the Town website.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Barbara reported that the Elder Law Program, to help elders with finances, was discussed at the last meeting.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:32 AM.

The next meeting will be held on April 3, 2008 at 9 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary